

Unit Seven: Establishment of Buddhism

Since the advent of Buddhism in sixth century B.C., up to its disappearance from India about 12th century A.D., Buddhism was able to exist approximately one thousand eight hundred years in its land of birth amidst supportive and destructive forces. Although it was started in a small area centered in *Magadha* and *Kosala* kingdoms in northern India, gradually it spread throughout almost all quarters of India before its disappearance. It was capable enough to exist, fulfilling the religious requirements of the people throughout its long history, not only because of its striking features introduced by its founder, the Buddha, but also because of the fact that Buddha had taken every possible step for its establishment and endurance during his life time.

Through the constant dedication of the Buddha for preaching his *Dhamma* to all walks of people in different quarters of the country, the Buddha was able to form a fourfold assembly (*catuparisā*), which included both *Bhikkhus* and *Bhikkhunis* together with laymen and laywomen, not long after his enlightenment. It was a dynamic institution of Buddhism which gave the religion its vitality.¹ This fourfold assembly of Buddhism consisted of the people belonging to all the four castes, *Kshatriya*, *Brāhmaṇa*, *Vaiśya* and *Śūdra*. Buddhism was a religion which advocated equality of the people by birth. Therefore without any discrimination among themselves, the Buddhist community worked hard to practice Buddhism for the sake of spiritual perfection. *Thera* and *Therī gāthās* are the living examples to show how the members of both Orders of the Buddha acquired the highest religious achievements through the practice of Buddhism.

An important requirement for the stability of a religion, according to the Buddha, is that the followers of the religion become well versed in its teachings, achieve its highest fruits, able to give a grounded exposition of the teachings and capable of refuting opposing religious views.² In this respect, the Buddha was quite successful in establishing and stabilizing his teaching during his life time. It was really the expectation of the Buddha since his enlightenment. It is said that the Buddha, not long after his enlightenment, told *Māra* that he would not pass away into *Parinibbāna* until his fourfold assembly is well and firmly established.³

As an aged teacher of long standing, the Buddha, at a time when his life was coming to its close, proudly proclaimed that there are now senior monks, middle ranking monks, novices, senior nuns, middle ranking nuns, novice nuns, white-robed lay followers of both male and female, and celibate and non-celibate, who are experienced, trained, skilled, who have attained peace from bondage, able to proclaim true *Dhamma*, able to refute by means of the *Dhamma* any opposing doctrines that may arise and, having done so, give a grounded exposition of the *Dhamma*. "The holy life, I proclaim prosperous and flourishes, is widespread, widely known, proclaimed far and wide, well proclaimed among humans."⁴

Purity and integrity of the followers are quite necessary for the stability and durability of a religion. Purity leads to acquire one's own perfection as well as to be qualified for one to carry out the mission of propagating the teaching to increase the number of followers, while integrity leads to maintain the community of the followers for a long time to come. In order to

¹ Jotiya Dhirasekera, *Buddhist Monastic Discipline*, Ministry of Higher Education Research Publication Series, Sri Lanka, 1982. P.148.

² D. Pāsādika-sutta.(PTS) 111. 125f.

³ D. Mahā parinibbāna-sutta, (PTS) 111, P.113

⁴ D. Pāsādika-sutta (PTS)111, 125

make sure of these two requirements, the Buddha had taken the step to establish Orders of the monks and the nuns.

Establishment of Bhikkhu Order

It is the *Theravāda* view that during the first twenty years since the enlightenment of the Buddha, there was no organized Order bound by system of codified law for the monks.⁵ During that period, the monks were said to have lived in accordance with the *Dhamma*, which is known as *Brahmacariya*. The moving force of the *Brahmacariya* life was the Noble Eightfold Path, which comes under threefold training, *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā*. Earlier disciples, who had voluntarily joined the Buddha to lead the *Brahmacariya* life, thoroughly dedicated themselves in achieving its result, the cessation of suffering through threefold training. Therefore, there was not a question with regard to the purity and the unity of the disciples. The Buddha did not promulgate the rules, which have the legal validity for the protection of the Sangha, as long as the causes of corruption did not appear among them.⁶ With the promulgation of the *Vinaya* rules by the Buddha, the monastic Order became an organization abiding by the law and the members of which, had to maintain collective responsibility to the order in relation to its purity and unity.

Rules were laid down by the Buddha from time to time when a monk committed an offence, which was considered to be going against purity and well-being of the monastic life. Thus the number of rules was increased up to two hundred and twenty, which come under seven categories according to the gravity of the offence. The number of rules coming under each category is as follows:

1 Pārājika	04
2 Sanghādisesa	13
3 Aniyata	02
4 Nissaggiya pācittiya	30
5 Pācittiya	92
6 Pātiesaniya	04
7 Sekhiyā vatta	75
Total	220

Punishments

The offender has to undergo certain punishment according to the category of the offence. So, punishment of expulsion from the Order is imposed upon the offender of *Pārājika* rules. All offences other than *Pārājika* are remediable. An offender of *Sanghādisesa* is temporarily expelled from the community until he undergoes the remedial procedure. First requirement which should be fulfilled by the offender is to confess his guilt in front of a member of the Order before the dawn of the next day. Then it is considered as non-concealed (*apaticchanna*) offence. One who violates the *Sanghādisesa* offence, which is not concealed has to practice an observance called *Mānatta*, as a disciplinary procedure for six days. For the offence of *Sanghādisesa*, which has been intentionally concealed, disciplinary action starts with the penalty of *Parivāsa*, a probation, duration of which would have to be counted according to the dates of concealment. When the

⁵ VinA (Samantapāsādikā).1. 213

⁶ M. 1 (Bhaddāli-sutta).445

period of probation is over, the offender has to undergo *Mānatta* for six days. After successful completion of both *Parivāsa* and *mānatta*, the offender is reinstated by the formal act called *Abbhāna* by the monks.

Aniyata is an undefined offence, which has to be decided by the monks as to whether it belongs to a *Pārājika* or *Sangādisesa*. The offence should be treated accordingly. *Nissaggiya Pācittiya* is an offence mainly related to the requisites of the monks. The offence occurred when a monk receives the requisites against the accepted way. As a punishment, the offender has to confess his guilt after giving up what is accepted against the law. For the *pācittiya* and other remaining offences, purity can be obtained through the confession.

One of the purposes of introducing legal system to the Order as a restrictive method, is said to be the stability and continuance of the *Dhamma* (*Saddhammatthitiyā*).⁷ Maintenance of this legal institution was a collective responsibility of all the members. Each and every individual member was liable to ensure the purity and the continuance of the Order under the legal institution. After the introduction of this legal system, the Monastic Order of the monks gradually became a well established and self controlled organization. It was a self-administration. All the administrative power was granted by the Buddha to the Order. Even the local bodies of the Sangha were able to exercise the full-pledged power to conduct their own activities without referring to any hierarchy.

Entrance to the Order

At the outset of the Buddhist order, it consisted of those who were really interested to join *Brahmacariya* after listening to the Buddha. For them, there was no specific method to enter into the Order except on the invitation of the Buddha. Knowing the willingness of the disciple to join the religious path, The Buddha invited him to live in accordance with the *Brahmacariya*. The formula of the invitation of the Buddha runs as follows: '*Ehi Bhikkhu caratha Brahmacariyam sammā dukkhassa antakiriya*' (O Bhikkhu, come and live in the *Brahmacariya* for the cessation of suffering). Immediately after the invitation was made, the disciple was considered to be admitted to the Order. As the formula begins with the word '*Ehi bhikkhu*', the admission to the Order was known as *Ehibhikkhu Upasampadā*.

When the people, who were willing to join the Order increased in number, with the understanding their difficulty in meeting the Buddha, the Buddha allowed the Sangha to perform both ordination (*Pabbajjā*) and higher ordination (*Upasampadā*) on behalf of the Buddha. From then onward, higher ordination became a formal act of *ñatticatuttha*, which should be done by the Sangha with the participation of twenty monks in the areas where monks are easily available and five monks in the areas where monks are rare. With the admission to Sangha through the *Upasampadā* formal act, one becomes a full-fledged member of the Sangha endowed with all the privileges and rights of the *Sāsana*.

Internal Administration of the Sangha

Formal Acts

⁷ Vin. 111. 21

The Buddha was so liberal that the administrative power over the Sangha was granted to the Order of the Sangha itself without keeping it with him. The administrative activities of the Sangha have to be conducted by means of the formal acts (*Vinaya-kammās*) by the Sangha through the appointed body of the members. Number of the members of the body of the Sangha is decided according to the nature of the formal act. According to the number of the members of the committee of the Sangha, who undertake the formal act, the committee is fourfold:

1 Group of four monks (*catuvaggika*)

The committee which needs the quorum of four members is valid for all acts except *Upasampadā*, *Pavāraṇa* and *Abbhāṇa*.

2 Group of five monks (*pancavaggika*)

That which consisted of the quorum of five members is valid for all acts except *Upasampadā* in the areas where monks are abundantly available.

3 Group of ten monks (*dasavaggika*)

That which consisted of the quorum of ten members is valid for all acts except *Abbhāṇa*.

4 Group of twenty monks (*vīsativaggika*) or with additional monks (*atireka-vīsativaggika*)

That which consisted of the quorum of twenty or more members is valid for all formal acts.

The formal acts, according to the way of its performance, are considered as twofold:

1 *Catti-dutiya-kamma*

2 *ñatti-catuttha-kamma*

The formal act, which can be performed by reading the proposal of the resolution (*ñatti*) once and by the proclamation of *kammavācā* is known as *ñattidutiya-kamma*.

The formal act which can be performed by reading the proposal of the resolution (*ñatti*) thrice and by the proclamation of *kammavācā* is known as *ñatticatuttha-kamma*

Each of the formal acts has to be dealt with matters pertaining to its own category. The matters relating to the Sangha, which should be dealt with one of the above mentioned acts are as follows:

Vivādādhikarana

Anuvādādhikarana

Āpattādhikarana

Kiccādhikarana

Disputes arising within the community pertaining to matters of the *Dhamma* or *Vinaya* come under *Vivādādhikarana*. *Anuvādādhikarana* deals with the accusations of the fellow-members. *Āpattādhikarana* includes offences for transgressions of the *vinaya* rules. Matters resulting from failure to observe proper procedure in all monastic acts come under *Kiccādhikarana*. In addition, there are some other formal acts of the Sangha which do not come under the above mentioned categories. They are non-disciplinary and non-disputatious, such as higher ordination

(*Upasampadā*), offering the *Kathina* robe (*kathina*), termination of any retreat (*Pavāraṇa*) and consecration of boundaries (*Sīmā-sammata*).

Ritual of Pātimokkha Recitation or Uposatha-kamma

Another important activity of the Sangha introduced by the Buddha to ensure the purity and unity of the Sangha is the ritual of recitation of *Pātimokkha*. The code of disciplinary rules promulgated by the Buddha for the good conduct of the Sangha is known as *Pātimokkha*. As there was no assigned activity for the monks to be performed in a *Uposatha* day, though other religious clergies engaged in their own special activities, the Buddha has introduced recitation of *Pātimokkha* to his monastic members to be performed in the *Uposatha* days as the *Uposatha* activity.⁸ Therefore, the recitation of *Pātimokkha* is also known as *Uposatha-kamma*. As the *Uposatha* day for the monks falls fortnightly, the recitation has to be performed twice a month namely, full moon day and fourteenth day of other half of month. The purpose of this recital was to protect the purity of the individuals and unity of the whole community. It seems that the Buddha has designed the activity of the recital in order to ensure those two purposes.

The ritual of *Pātimokkha* has to be performed by the Sangha with the participation of all the higher ordained members of a particular group. Members of the other groups have to be excluded from the recital. Before the recital, there are some preliminaries which should be fulfilled by the Sangha. Preliminaries are of two kinds, namely preliminaries (*pubbakarana*) related to the preparation of the venue of the recital and the preliminaries (*Pubbakicca*) pertaining to the Sangha. Cleaning the venue (*Sammajjani*), lighting (*Padīpo*), keeping water for washing feet and drinking (*Udakam*) and preparing the seats (*Āsanena*) are regarded as preliminaries relating to the venue of the recital.

Communication of (i) the consent (*Chanda*) and (ii) the innocence or the purity (*Pārisuddhi*) of the absentees due to illness, (iii) announcement of season, (month and date) (*Utukkhānam*), (iv) checking the number of monks gathered (quorum) (*Bhikkhugananā*) and (v) admonition of the nuns by the monks (*Ovādo*) are the preliminaries relating to the Sangha.

Among the second kind of preliminaries, first two are very important in respect of purity and unity of the monks. Presence of every member of the particular group of monks in the recital is compulsory according to the rules of the *Pātimokkha* ritual except those who are unable to attend due to severe illness. But they have to inform the Sangha their consent and the purity through a messenger. The monks who gathered for the ritual also must express their purity by way of confession before the recitation.

The actual recital of *Pātimokkha* takes place after the fulfillment of those preliminaries. With the consent of the monks, a capable monk is appointed as the reciter and he proceeds with the recital of each rule coming under seven categories. During the recital all members of the congregation should listen attentively to it and ponder over its contents and whosoever discover himself to be guilty of any offence should confess the same before the Sangha.⁹

Fortnightly gathering of all the members of the Sangha in a particular time, being pure by means of confession of the guilts, promising not to indulge in transgression of the offences in

⁸ Māvagga, Uposathakkhandhaka

⁹ Vin. 1.103.

the future and receiving the opportunity to remember the code of disciplinary rules can be regarded as the very good results of the *Pātimokkha* recital, which directly affect the wellbeing and the stability of the Monastic Order.

As the results of these rules, regulations, activities and customs introduced by the Buddha for the establishment, stability, concord and wellbeing of the Order of the Sangha, it secured the honor of being the longest standing religious organization in the history of the religions in the world. In this respect, Peter Harvey observes:

"Its sustaining power is shown by the fact that no other human institution has had such a long-lasting continuous existence, along with such a wide diffusion, as the Buddhist Sangha."¹⁰

Establishment of Bhikkhuni Order

It is no doubt that the four assemblies of the Buddha - Bhikkhu, Bhikkhuni, Upāsaka and Upāsikā equally contributed much to the stability of Buddhism in India during the time of the Buddha. The Buddha himself admitted that the four assemblies, when they are endowed with good religious qualities, are indeed an ornament to the Sangha, the Buddhist community.

*Bhikkhū ca sīlasampanno – bhikkhunī ca bahussutā
upāsako ca yo saddho – yā ca saddhā upāsikā
ete kho sangham sobhenti – ete hi sanghasobhanā.*¹¹

'Virtuous monks and learned nuns
Laymen and laywomen of great devotion
These indeed are an ornament to the Sangha.
They do adorn the Sangha.'

Though the appearance of the Bhikkhunīs in the Sāsana came to exist some time later than the other three assemblies, it seems that the establishment of a Bhikkhunī Sāsana in due course was a preconceived idea of the Buddha. It is said that the Buddha, not long after his enlightenment, told Māra, the evil one that he would not pass away until his fourfold assembly is well and firmly established.¹² This gives the idea that the Buddha was expecting proper time to come to establish the Order of the Bhikkhunīs.

Many Buddhist scholars, who wrote on the women position in Buddhism, say that the Buddha first rejected the request to grant permission, when Mahāpajāpati Gotami requested the Buddha to permit them to enter into the Order. It is really a misrepresentation of the Buddha when we say that the Buddha had rejected thrice the request of Gotami. What the Buddha really said to Gotami when she made the request, according to Bhikkuni Khandhaka of Cūlavagga, was that 'Do not be interested O, Gotami, about the entry of women into my Order'.¹³ This is not really a rejection, but an emphasis on the gravity of her request.

¹⁰ Peter Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhism Teaching, History and Practice*, Cambridge University Press, 1990, p.73

¹¹ A.11. 8

¹² D.11. 113.

¹³ Vin. 11. 253

The Buddha as a founder of a religion had to think twice about the establishment of women Order not only because of the prevailing misconception on the women in the society but also the impact of the women on the monks who are already in the Order. The position of the women in the society dominated by Brahmins was not at all a favorable one to women. Not only were they regarded as inferior to men but they were also deprived of religious rights. The imposition of the prohibition of Upanyana (religious right) upon them, reduced them to the status of Śūdras.¹⁴ On the other hand, they were considered to be incapable of achieving the highest religious fruits. It is recorded in the Samutta-nikāya as saying of the Māra, the evil one that:

*'Yam tam isīhi pattaḥḥam – Thānam durabhisambhavam
Natam dvangulapaññāya – sakkā pappotum itthiya'*¹⁵

"No woman with the two-finger-wisdom, which is hers, could ever hope to reach those heights which are attained only by the sages."

The Buddha also was aware of the socially existing view about the capacity of women for spiritual perfection. It is quite clear from the fact that the Buddha asked Mahāpajāpati Gotami when she visited the Buddha before her final passing away, to perform a miracle to disprove the suspicion about the religious attainments of the women.

*"Thīnam dhammābhisamaye ye bālā vimatim gatā
Tesam ditthipahānattham iddhiṃ dasshehi gotamī"*¹⁶.

'O, Gotami, perform a miracle in order to dispel the wrong views of those foolish men, who are in doubt of the spiritual potentialities of women.'

Though the Buddha do not regard the wrong views, about the women, existing in the society, he had to think about the possible breaking down of the faith of the people on the Sāsana, when he permitted women to enter into His Order. The Buddha had always a high regard for the faith of the people. One of the reasons for promulgating the Vinaya rules is said to be the enhancement of the faith of those who already have the faith.¹⁷

The most serious factor that might have led the Buddha to lay more emphasis on the request of Gotami may be the possible bad results of the impact of the women on the life of the monks. When the women are allowed to enter into the Order, there may be the opportunity for the corruption of the monk's *Brahmacariya* life, where sensual pleasure is considered as being detrimental to the spiritual progress. The Buddha was aware of the fact that some groups of mendicants of the day were freely mingling with female mendicants and vociferously enjoying their company.¹⁸ These male mendicants in the companies of female mendicants were reported as saying 'Blissful indeed is the contact of the soft and tender hands of these young female mendicants.'

¹⁴ Altekar, A. S., *The position of Women in Hindu Civilization*, Banaras Hindu University, 1956. P.204-5.

¹⁵ S. I. 129

¹⁶ Apadāna. II. 535

¹⁷ Vin. III. 21

¹⁸ M. I. Culladhammasamādāna-sutta, p.305

The seriousness of being nuns with the monks may have caused the Buddha's reluctance to grant at once the permission for women to enter into the Order. However, when Ānanda requested on behalf of Mahāpajāpati Gotami, the Buddha granted the admission of women to the Order provided by the fact that they must accept the eight conditions known as *Atthagarudhaam*. For the Buddha, there was no question about the potentiality of women to achieve the higher fruits of religious life. That was the reason for the statement that he made to Ānanda to the effect that 'Women, having taken to the life of Pabbajjā in Buddhism, are capable of attaining the higher fruits of religious life such as Sotāpatti, Sakadāgāmi, Anāgāmi and Arahant'.

*'Bhabbo kho ānanda mātugamo tathāgatappavedute dhammavinaye agāasmā anagāriyam pabbajitvā sotāpatti phalam pi sakadāgāmiphalam pi anāgāmiphalam pi arahattaphalam pi sacchikātum.'*¹⁹

On the one hand the potentiality of women for the religious achievements and on the other the repercussion of allowing women to enter the Order was the dilemma that the Buddha had to face. The only solution to the problem was to impose the weight on the mind of the women and to open the door for them to enter into the Order. With the acceptance of eight conditions *Mahāpajāpati Gotami* was declared as having received the higher ordination. Other women who came with *Gotami* received their ordination from the Sangha. The acceptance of eight conditions was common to all the women who enter into the Order. Except for the first batch of women, the new comers to the Order should seek confirmation of higher ordination from both Orders, *Bhikkhu* and *Bhikkhuni*. Method of the *Upasampadā* accepted for the nuns is known as *Atthavācika Upasampadā* as it is given by both Orders separately in a formal act of *ñatti-catuttha*.

Bhikkhuni Khandhaka of *CullaVagga* records the story about the establishment of *Bhikkhuni* Order as follows:

When The Buddha was dwelling at the Nigrodha grove in Kapilavatthu, Mahāpajāpati Gotami approached the Buddha and requested him to allow women to enter into the Order. Then the Buddha said: "Do not be interested, O Gotami, in the admission of women into the Order". Mahāpajāpati Gotami repeated her request. The Buddha replied the same. She requested the Buddha for the admission of women into the Order even for the third time. The Buddha repeated the same reply even for the third occasion. Then, Mahāpajāpati Gotami, knowing that the Buddha did not allow women into the Order, went away desperately.

After some time, the Buddha left Nigrodha grove in Kapilavatthu for Kūtāgāra-sālā of Mahāvana in Vesālī. Mahāpajāti Gotami, who did not give up her idea, having shaved her hair and having dressed in yellow robes with many sākyā women, walked alone to Kūtāgārasālā in Vesālī where the Buddha was dwelling.

Atthagarudhamma (eight conditions)

Eight conditions which are known as *Atthagarudhammās* under which The Buddha has granted women permission to enter the Order are as follows:

1 A nun who has been ordained (even) for a century must greet respectfully, rise up from her seat, salute with joined palms, do proper homage to a monk ordained but that day.

¹⁹ A. 1v. 276

2 A nun must not spend the rains in a residence where there is no monk.

3 Every half month a nun should desire two things from the Order of monks: the asking (as to the date) of Observance day, and the coming for exhortation.

4 After the rains, a nun must 'invite' before both Orders in respect of three matters: what was seen, what was heard, what was suspected.

5 A nun, offending against an important rule, must undergo Mānatta for half a month before both Orders.

6 When as a probationer, she has trained in the six rules for two years, she should seek ordination from both Orders.

7 A monk must not be abused or reviled in any way by a nun.

8 From today, admonition of monks by nuns is forbidden, admonition of nuns by monks is not forbidden.²⁰

Codified Law of the Nuns

As for the monks, the Buddha had laid down a list of rules which has the legal value for the nuns for their well-being and stability. Most of the rules of the nun's *Pātimokkha* are quite similar to that of the monks. There are some additional rules pertaining to the femininity in the Bhikkhuni *Pātimokkha*. Concerning the similarity between the disciplinary rules of both Orders, Prof. Jotiya Dhirasekera observes:

"The regulation of the discipline of the newly established Bhikkhuni Sāsana does not seem to have necessitated any structural alterations of the original *Pātimokkha*. The original classification of *sikkhāpadas* into different categories is accepted in the Bhikkhuni *Pātimokkha*, almost in *toto*, the group of *Aniyatas* of the Bhikkhu *Pātimokkha* being the only one to be left out in the latter."²¹

Numbers of the rules coming under different categories of the Bhikkhuni *Pātimokkha* are as follows:

Pārājika		08
Sanghādisesa	17	
Nissaggiya Pācittiya	30	
Pācittiya		166
Pāṭidesanīya	08	
Sekhiyā	75	
Total	304	

When we examine the disciplinary codes of monks and nuns, it is quite evident that the Buddha has expected both Orders to work together for the personal and collective purity and the unity

²⁰ Book of the discipline, V. 354-55

²¹ Jotiya Dhirasekera, *Buddhist Monastic Discipline*, Ministry of Higher Education Series, Sri Lanka, 1982, p.149.

of the Orders and finally for the well-being of the Sāsana to be existed for a long time for the benefit of mankind.

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